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CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGY. II.

SOCIETY.

TO SPEAK of Jesus as anticipating a regenerate society may appear to some as savoring of literalism and to others as a mere modernizing of the simple records of the gospels. Both objections would not be altogether without foundation. There is constant danger that, in the attempt to restate the teachings of Jesus in the terms of today's thought, exposition shall wait too subserviently upon desire. The first century, albeit surprisingly like the nineteenth, was nevertheless not the nineteenth, and Jesus the Jew was not a product of Greek syllogisms and German hypotheses. Nevertheless, were one to come to the words of Jesus unbiased by traditional interpretations, the impression would be inevitable that the goal of his efforts was the establishment of an ideal society quite as much as the production of an ideal individual. At any rate so his audiences thought.¹ They sometimes sought to make him a leader of a revolution; sometimes they endeavored to preëempt the chief offices in the future state. At one time they hailed him as the successor of David and carried him in triumph to the temple; while in the hopes of his followers the chief significance of his return from the tomb and his newly revealed life lay again in the possibility of revolution and the reëstablishment of a puissant Hebrew kingdom.

That Jesus did not yield more completely to some of the efforts made by his hearers to hurry the realization of these hopes is less a testimony to their misunderstanding than to his own sagacity. And even if one does not choose to lay much

¹John 6:15; Matt. 20:21; Mark 11:10; Acts 1:6. In this connection the charge brought against Jesus before Pilate (Luke 23:2-5) as well as the famous conversation of John 18:33-38 deserve consideration. BEYSLAG (*Neutestamentliche Theologie*, I, 155) in this connection has a couple of pregnant sentences as a sort of introduction to his study of the church.

stress upon these early guesses at the thought of Jesus, is it altogether without significance that he so uniformly speaks of himself as the Son of Man?

But we are not left to conjecture or *a priori* argument. Jesus himself has chosen as his term for the highest good¹—or at least for one of the prerequisites of its attainment—one that in itself suggests social relations—the kingdom of God.² No other term—unless it be Son of Man—is so characteristic of Jesus; none is more certainly his. Early Christianity, it is true, soon displaced it with the more concrete term church, and later Christianity has not hesitated to confound the two; but with Jesus there was neither the substitution nor the confusion. Throughout the gospel sources whether of the synoptic or the Johannine cycle, the usage is constant. The kingdom is the goal of effort, the reward of persecution, and the abode of blessedness.

If any weight is to be given to the teachings of Jesus, it is imperative that the meaning of this term as he used it should be accurately gauged, and it is characteristic of the new school of biblico-theological writers like Weiss, Wendt, Beyschlag, and Bruce, that, with its mastering desire for the purely objective presentation of New Testament teachings, it should especially seek to discover and expound the "mysteries of the kingdom" as the center of all essentially Christian doctrine. The effect of such exposition has been felt almost as much in the realm of dogmatics and apologetics as in that of biblical theology, but as much as in either within the circle of earnest searchers for a philanthropy and politics that shall be at once scientific and Christian.³

¹ For a justification of this term see Matt. 13: 44, 45. See also ISSEL, *Die Lehre vom Reiche Gottes im Neuen Testament*, p. 52 sq.

² Or kingdom of Heaven. For present purposes the distinction between the two terms is unessential. The content of each is the same, although there are doubtless subjective if not critical grounds for the use of each in different accounts. See WENDT, *Teaching of Jesus*, I., 370 n.

³ "No one can read attentively many modern theological works without observing that the kingdom of God occupies a much more prominent place in them than it has in the writings of former times. This is partly due to the fact that scholars of the present day are more careful to preserve the genuine historical ideas of other ages and peoples instead of casting them into the forms or moulds of later thought. . . . It is not

I.

If investigation in regard to Christ's conception of the individual's ideal state was hampered by the scarcity of data, the difficulties in the present case result from their abundance.¹ In one way this is extremely fortunate. Jesus never formally defines the term, and we are left to the discovery of that which is common in its usage. Naturally the investigator congratulates himself that the scope of his search is large. Yet the wealth of material is not without its drawbacks. A term thus frequently used of necessity will express at various times and in different connections different shades of thought. To discover the substance that lies behind this varying usage and is common to it all is no small task.

1. It is easy to discover that Jesus does not mean a merely political kingdom, or theocratic state. It is as easy for political enthusiasts today as it was in his own time to mistake here.² There are some of Christ's statements that will bear a political interpretation, but they will also and indeed more naturally support another. Here, as always in dealing with language not containing formal definitions, it is necessary to canvass the entire field before recording decisions. He is indeed a singular exegete who discovers in either the early or the later language of Jesus anything that savors only of revolution or constitutional propa-

merely an old Jewish form of thought, which it is useful to study for the elucidation of the biblical literature. . . . it is regarded by many as the most natural and adequate conception that we can take to guide us in forming a system of Christian theology. Further this notion of the kingdom of God has not merely a speculative but a practical bearing ; it is an idea that craves to be realized in fact, or rather, it is not merely an idea but a great reality, which has not yet fully attained its perfection, but in the perfecting of which men's help and labor may and should be employed."—CANDLISH, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 2-3. These words are even truer today than when written eleven years ago.

¹ There are 106 passages in the gospels that contain references to the kingdom ; 50 occur in Matthew, 15 in Mark, 38 in Luke, 3 in John. Many of these, however, are parallel.

² As do some of the Christian socialists. See for a brief account, the article on Christian Socialism in the first number of this JOURNAL. WENDT, *Teaching of Jesus*, I., p. 364 sq., has an admirable critique of this view.

ganda. The progress made by Jesus in the exposition of his mission does not consist in the erection of an eschatology out of the ruins of political hopes. At the beginning of his career he refuses the tempting suggestion to become a new Cæsar;¹ later his disciples are warned against "the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod"²—that is of an overweening political ambition; he flees from those who would force him into politics,³ and the Roman Pilate has no difficulty during the last hours of Jesus in convincing himself that in his prisoner he has the opposite of Barabbas the revolutionist.⁴

2. Nor does Jesus use the term kingdom of God as figure of speech merely to indicate a perfect method of life for the individual.⁵ While of course it was not without ethical content, the term is not a mere synonym for personal holiness or righteousness. Indeed there is but one saying of Jesus⁶ that in any way lends support to the view that he thought of the kingdom as a subjective state of the individual, and even that can hardly be used as a basis upon which to build an individualistic system of self-culture. It is true that Jesus repudiates any grossly materialistic conception of his kingdom. It is not to be achieved by the ordinary means of world-rulers.⁷ It certainly is not to be established by the sword.⁸ Properly defined it is spiritual. But men are its members, entering into it, or if unworthy, rejected

¹ Matt. 4 : 8-10; Luke 4 : 5-8.

² Mark 8 : 15; *cf.* Mark 10 : 42.

³ John 6 : 15.

⁴ John 18 : 33-38.

⁵ See TOLSTOI, *The Kingdom of God is within You*.

⁶ Luke 17 : 20, 21, where it is very likely judging from the context that the expression *ἐν τοῖς ὑμῶν* is used as rhetorically equivalent to *ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν*. With either interpretation it need not of necessity refer to a subjective appropriation of the kingdom. Jesus would hardly have credited his opponents with the possession of the kingdom of God—especially as we know he more than once charges them with the opposite (John 8 : 44). Taken in a collective sense the words are very natural: The kingdom was in the midst of them in the persons of Jesus and his disciples.

⁷ Matt. 4 : 8; *cf.* Matt. 11 : 12.

⁸ John 18 : 36.

and cast out from it. In the thought of Jesus it is a kingdom, not a congeries of kingdoms as numerous as there are God-fearing men. If Paul in one instance¹ seems to speak as if it were a discipline,—“not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost”—it is because his readers can be trusted to recognize the boldness of the metonymy. Jesus never so speaks. With him ethical teachings are expressed explicitly and literally by such terms as “perfect,”² “righteousness,”³ and the like. In one case he is reported as making righteousness and the kingdom as coördinate goods.⁴ But we do not find in his words taken altogether justification for the closely allied conception that “the kingdom is the rational idea of the chief good”⁵ which “can by no means be identified with the universal moral society which is being developed in the world.”⁶ While there is in these words a gratifying recognition of the supreme position accorded by Jesus to the kingdom, and while such a view emphasizes what is certainly a dominant teaching of his, namely, that the highest good consists in entering the kingdom, that is gaining salvation, it is as certainly doing violence to some of the analogies that furnish much of the content of its definition when the kingdom is made altogether supra-mundane. Many of the figures and words employed by Jesus⁷ in speaking of this “Highest Good” show that he regarded it as by no means merely that super-sensuous, super-rational postulate of morality “which has the kingdom of moral righteousness on earth as its intra-mundane correlative.”⁸

¹ Rom. 14; 17.

² Matt. 5:48, 19:21.

³ Matt. 3:15; 5:6, 10; cf. John 16:8, 10.

⁴ Matt. 6:33.

⁵ KAFTAN, *The Truth of Christianity*, II., 377

⁶ KAFTAN, II., 379. See also his *Wesen der Christlichen Religion*, 2d ed., p. 236 sq. J. WEISS (*Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, p. 64), deals rather summarily with Kaftan's views.

⁷ See for instance Matt. 13:38 sq. and below.

⁸ KAFTAN, II., 366.

It is doubtless true that, with Jesus, the term filled the same office as some rational postulate that is the dominant conception of any modern philosophy. But the identification of the content of the two dominant thoughts is dangerous. It is one thing to appreciate the exact position of Jesus, and it is quite another to translate it into the terms of one's own philosophy. The first step is one of interpretation, and must always condition the second. The chief criticism of this appropriation of the kingdom as the capstone of a philosophy is the same that must be passed upon so much of the work of the theologian—it is attractive, it is doubtless in the main true, but it is not the thought of Jesus. With him the kingdom was not a subjective but a concrete, objective reality: one that could be expected and enjoyed, if not here and now, at any rate in another world and age.

3. When thus we have rejected as incomplete these two conceptions, the one the gift of economic and the other of philosophical zeal for Christian truth, we have to deal with a very simple alternative. Did Jesus think of this concrete, objective kingdom of God as an eschatological or as a present reality? Was it, with him, to use current expressions, heaven, or was it society? Upon the answer given to this question will depend one's conception of the kingdom as purely religious or as both religious and social.

There is much that is worthy of consideration in the view that the use of the word by Jesus meant a Messianic millenium to be enjoyed by the righteous after death, or after the coming of a new age. On the historical side there may be urged the very conservative argument that Jesus "lived and spoke within the circle of eschatological ideas which Judaism had developed more than two hundred years before; but he controlled them, by giving them a new content, and forcing them into a new direction."¹ On the exegetical it may be even more forcibly argued that "the kingdom of the Messiah is the actual consummation of the prophetic idea of the rule of God," and that the term kingdom of God and kindred expressions "never signify any-

¹ HARNACK. *History of Dogma*, I, 62.

thing else than the kingdom of the Messiah, even in those passages where they appear to denote the (invisible) church, the moral kingdom of the Christian religion, and such like, or to express some modern abstraction of the concrete conception which is one given in the history."¹ While the historical and exegetical spirit when once touched with the glow of religious feeling can say: "We await no kingdom of God which is to descend from heaven upon the earth and destroy this world; but we hope to be assembled with the church of Jesus Christ in the heavenly βασιλεία. In this sense can we yearn and say as did the ancient Christians: "Thy kingdom come.""²

The worth of each of these grounds for holding to an apocalyptic and eschatological conception of the kingdom is considerable, but especially can one appreciate the historical position. Probably the recognition of the importance of the apocalyptic literature in the formation of the early Christian vocabulary, if not Christology, may yet be still further emphasized. And it cannot be denied that Jesus often used expressions³ that, were they the only ones he had left, would be sufficient to justify the somewhat sweeping statement of Harnack⁴ that "the gospel entered into the world as an apocalyptic eschatological message, apocalyptical and eschatological not only in its form, but in its contents." But notwithstanding all this, the total impression made by the statements of Jesus in regard to the kingdom is not that of a post-mortem or post-catastrophic condition. At the outset of his preaching he announced its

¹ MEYER: Commentary on Matthew, 3:2. For excellent statement of the similar views on Schmoller and J. Weiss, as well as the opposing views of Ritschl, see the mediating article of SCHNEDERMANN in *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1894, No. 7, an abstract of which appears in the *Thinker*, January, 1895.

² J. WEISS. *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, p. 76.

³ For instance, Luke 13:28 sq. Mark 9:1. Matt. 25:31 sq.

⁴ *History of Dogma*, I, 58. — In the next sentence to that quoted, however, "apocalyptical" is given so broad a definition as to modify the force of this statement, and a few pages later (I, 62) the author gives what appears like a hesitating assent to the belief in a present kingdom.

approach;¹ in the synagogue at Nazareth he declared the glowing promises of Isaiah fulfilled in the ears of his hearers;² unbelieving and hostile professional religious teachers were told that there was no longer need of straining after a glimpse of a distant glory, for the kingdom was among them;³ his followers are congratulated on seeing that for which their ancestors had longed, but had not seen;⁴ the kingdom in the person of its members is already the good seed in the field, that is the world,⁵ some of these members having had to struggle mightily in order to gain their entrance;⁶ and the word of the kingdom is described as having different results in the hearts of different men.⁷ The natural force of some of these passages may be evaded, but it is impossible in the light of them all and of other sayings of Jesus to believe that he occupied an exclusively eschatological point of view.. Only on one or the other of two alternatives can the opposite opinion be supported: Either Jesus saw the impossibility of early plans for social or political revolution and looked to a heavenly Messianic kingdom, or such passages as are not clearly eschatological are to be rejected as the mistaken reports and interpretations of the gospel history. So far as the last possibility is concerned the contrary is quite as likely; while in regard to the first suggestion, it may be urged that an unbiased chronology and exegesis fail to disclose any such change on the part of Jesus. And finally, the apparent contradiction, or at least variation in the presentation of the kingdom, as invisible and yet seen, as future and yet present, may be naturally explained as indicating first, that Jesus thought of the kingdom as a concrete reality rather than an idea, and second, that this reality was not to be left as an unattainable ideal, but was to be progressively realized, perhaps evolved.

The question, however, yet remains. If we are thus led to reject as incomplete such interpretations of this term of Jesus as would restrict it to politics, or character, or heaven, can we hope to discover an approximate definition which shall combine the

¹ Mark 1:15.² Luke 4:17-21.³ Luke 17:20 *sq.*⁴ Luke 10:23⁵ Matt. 13:24-43⁶ Matt. 11:12-15.⁷ Mark 4:3 *sq.* Cf. Matt. 13:3 *sq.*

elements of truth each can be seen to contain and yet be consonant with the general course of the thought of Jesus?¹

II.

By the kingdom of God Jesus meant *an ideal* (though progressively approximated) *social order in which the relation of men to God is that of sons, and (therefore) to each other, that of brothers.*

1. The point of departure for any interpretation of the term must be the historical expectation of the Jews in the days of Jesus. What that expectation was is now pretty accurately

¹ Were it desirable to take the space, it would be possible to give more fully the exegetical process by which the above definitions are rejected and another suggested. It may, perhaps, not be out of place to add a few representative authorities, whose definitions favor the social content. The author of *Ecce Homo* distinctly calls the kingdom of God a divine society (p. 48). BRUCE (*Kingdom of God*, p. 46) thus summarizes possible interpretations: "It signifies some form of divine dominion. Abstractly reviewed, it might denote the reign of the Almighty over all creation through the operation of natural law; or of the moral Governor of the world rendering to every man and nation according to their works; or of the God of Israel ruling over a chosen people, and bestowing on them power, peace and felicity as the reward of obedience to his divine will. Or it might mean something higher than any of these things, the highest form of dominion conceivable, the advent of which is emphatically fit to be the burden of a Gospel, viz., the reign of divine love exercised by God in his grace over human hearts believing in his love, and constrained thereby to yield him grateful affection and devoted service." He further quotes with approval the words of KEIM (*Jesu von Nazara*, p. 54): "Briefly stated, the religious heaven of Jesus meant the Fatherliness of God for men, the sonship of men for God, and the infinite spiritual good of the kingdom of heaven is Fatherhood and Sonship." EDELSHEIM (*Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah*, I, 270) gives a characteristic definition of the term "The rule of God, which was manifested in and through Christ is apparent in the church, gradually develops amidst hindrances; is triumphant at the second coming of Christ; and finally, perfected in the world to come," STEAD (*Kingdom of God*, p. 69) regards it as the fellowship of souls, divine and human, of which the law and life are love, wherein the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man as both are embodied in Jesus the Christ, are recognized and realized." WEISS (*Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, I, 63) does not accurately define the term as used by Jesus, but gives an approximate definition as follows: "What this kingdom of God is, is nowhere expressly said; the idea is regarded as one quite familiar to the people. In fact, no one in Israel, which was from the first to be a kingdom whose supreme Lord and King was Jehovah, could thereby understand anything else than a kingdom in which the will of God is fulfilled as perfectly upon earth as by the angels in heaven." CANDLISH (*Kingdom of God*, p. 197) gives us what "may be taken as a basis at least for an exposition of the idea; The gathering together of men, under God's eternal

known.¹ If all necessary allowance is made, on the one hand for the materialistic hopes of the masses, and on the other for the completed eschatology of the later Jewish writers, it will appear that the kingdom which was awaited was a new and divine Israelitish state, of which the Messiah as the representative of God, was to be the head ; all Jews, the members ; and all peoples, the subjects. Palestine was to be the seat of its capital, the righteousness of the Jew, the qualification of membership. It was as intensely national as the proud spirit of a nation that remembered a Solomon and a Judas Maccabaeus, and whose Jah was the only God, could imagine and describe under the smart of the Idumean and the Roman. To exhaust its glories was not within the power of literal language, and apocalypse and prophecy could alone faintly foretell the glories of the new age and kingdom. No Jew thought of it as an abstract ideal. The proclamation of its approach by the people's preacher, as he came in prophetic guise to the wilderness of Judea and summoned all to the washing of repentance, never would have so thrilled a nation had it been the ghostly thing announced by so many later Johns. It was as real as the men who sought to join it through repentance and renewed lives. The eternal religious influence of the Jew has lain not in his capacity to see the abstract in the concrete, the general in the specific, but in his noble genius for a rational anthropo-

law of righteous love, by the vital power of his redeeming love in Jesus Christ, brought to bear upon them through the Holy Spirit." BEYSLAG, *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, I, 41, declares that "the kingdom of God is wherever the will of God is done on earth as in Heaven ; that is, where it is observed in an ideal manner. Accordingly . . . the kingdom is that ideal condition to which mankind and the world's history shall arrive, when God according to his inmost being, as eternal spirit and sacred love shall be the all-filling and the all-conditioning element in the world." DENNY (*Studies in Theology*, p. 175-6) regards the kingdom as "a separate society in the world, in which there is a real union of persons who are conscious that they have what binds them to each other and separates them from the world ; but there is nothing formal or institutional about it." An even more concrete definition is given by those who identify a moral community with the kingdom ; e. g., Ritschl, Issel, Nitsch.

¹ LÜTGERT, *Das Reich Gottes nach den Synoptischen Evangelien*, ch. i ; SCHÜRER, *The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, Div. II., Vol. II., p. 170 sq.

morphism—the sight and the proclamation of the Invisible in that which his senses revealed to him. And his idea of the kingdom of God was no sweet Greek dream of a past Golden Age, but an intoxicating belief in a new state, in which righteousness was to reign and his enemies were to bow before the Anointed of Jehovah. His hope for the future was for an everlasting Jerusalem that was to descend from Heaven, arrayed like a bride for her bridegroom, as free as God's own realm. Even when the new kingdom grew more remote, and the hopelessness of a tranquil realization of its sway grew weak, the Jew never thought of it as anything but social. Its members might have passed through a resurrection, and have survived the fearful woes that ushered in its glories, but they were yet members, inseparable from each other and from the Messiah.

It was with the approaching fulfilment of this undefined expectation of an actual, concrete, though divine, political society, that Jesus began his preaching. He took the hope as he found it. He never needed to define it. He had simply to correct and elevate the immanent idea. The Christian kingdom is the Jewish kingdom, but transfigured and made universal by the clarifications of Jesus. Membership in it is no longer to be a matter of birth. The "children of the kingdom" were to know that the despised Gentile might enter in before them. Thus it is that, although Jesus sometimes refers especially to the dominion of God in his kingdom, he generally keeps, prominent the social conception.

2. And as a new social order the kingdom of God had really begun to be appreciable if only men would so believe. It was among them;¹ his divine benefactions were evidence that it had come upon them;² the unworthy hamlet that refused the entrance of its heralds was yet to know that in rejecting them it had rejected the object of its hopes.³ And the analogies with which this present and appreciable kingdom is described are full of social signification. As in its very genesis the term denoted

¹ Luke 17 : 20.² Matt. 21 : 28.³ Luke 10 : 10-12.

social relations, so is it a net,¹ a great feast,² a family³ into each of which men enter and from which they may be excluded. Its members are seeds scattered over the field of the world; its enemies are the tares sown by the king's enemy.⁴ For so true is Jesus to the old terminology that he even reexpresses with new force the conception of King Messiah. He is this king,⁵ and, to use the conventional imagery of the prophets, his coming is to be upon the clouds of heaven.⁶

3. This conclusion is confirmed by the position which the kingdom, as an ideal, occupies in relation to the world,⁷ as the actual social order. The world is not the demoniacal kingdom supposed by some scholars to have been established by Satan as a sort of counterpart to the Messianic, and from whose agents Jesus won a glorious victory. Such a view finds little foundation in the gospel records. Jesus does, indeed, argue pointedly that his deeds of kindness cannot be taken as substantiating his partnership with Satan—"a kingdom cannot be divided against itself." But, even if it were possible to make this the basis of a Christian demonology, it is exposed to a suspicion of semi-accommodation on the part of Jesus such as does not affect his use of the term "world." By this word Jesus evidently meant the environment within which and out of which his kingdom was to grow. And this environment is not merely physical, it is social. From it he chose his followers.⁸ To it, as the ultimate bounds of their activity, his disciples were to go, from its members to win still other subjects of the divine rule.⁹ In the midst of its influences his followers were to be left,¹⁰ the light that should

¹ Matt. 13 : 47-50.

² Luke 14 : 15 *sq.*

³ Matt. 23 : 28 ; Luke 15 : 11-32

⁴ Matt. 13 : 24-30, 36-43.

⁵ Luke 22, 28 *sq.*

⁶ Matt. 26 : 64 ; Mark 13 : 26. These apocalyptic sayings are here used as those of Jesus. For a discussion of the possibly composite character of the discourses, see WENDT, *Die Lehre Jesu*, I., 35 *sq.*

⁷ ὁ κόσμος. It is hardly necessary to call attention to the fact that in the English version of the New Testament "world" is the translation of αἰών (age) as well. The distinction, however, is not generally difficult to discover.

⁸ John 15 : 19.

⁹ Matt. 26 : 13.

¹⁰ John 17 : 15.

illumine it,¹ the salt that should preserve it.² In it, as in a great field, was to be reaped the harvest of good and bad men.³ In the Johannine Logos philosophy we find this conception a part of the very structure of the philosophy that interprets the life of Jesus. The world needed him as Saviour, and, because of God's love, received him,⁴ only to hate and reject him.⁵ And yet he was its light, its life.⁶ Gradually as the story of the defeat of Jesus grows darker, its opposition is more dwelt upon. The world lost the vision of its Saviour,⁷ rejoiced at his departure,⁸ hated and persecuted his followers.⁹ That which should have been full of a divine harmony grows discordant, the abode of evil.

To all this the kingdom of Jesus stands in opposition. So far as this social environment is thus evil, it could not account for the disciples, still less for himself. Yet the contrast is helpful, for if the one kingdom be social, so must also be the other. Indeed, it is pretty clear that Jesus foresaw that his ideal society would be composed of members of the old. If, as it slowly grew in the midst of such surroundings, it was to suffer, it nevertheless was to be cheered by its founder's victory and expect likewise to conquer¹⁰—if not in this age, at least in the next. But its very conquest would be thus that of a new over an old social order. This is the substance of the vision in what is perhaps an early Christian emendation of a Jewish apocalypse, "the kingdoms of the world are become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ."¹¹

4. It is in this contrast, also, that the general character of the new Christian social order is most distinctly seen. The old is evil; the new is ideal. The old is under a prince who is to be judged;¹² the new is of God. The members of the one are dominated by selfish ambition; those of the other are not so to be but are to seek greatness in service.¹³ Within one there is to be found the

¹ Matt. 5 : 14.² Matt. 5 : 13.³ Matt. 13 : 38.⁴ John 3 : 16, 17 : 18.⁵ John 3 : 19.⁶ John 8 : 12, 6 : 26 *sq.*⁷ John 14 : 19.⁸ John 16 : 20.⁹ John 15 : 19.¹⁰ John 16 : 33.¹¹ Rev. 11 : 15¹² John 16 : 8.¹³ Matt. 20 : 26, 27 ; 23 : 11 ; Mark 9 : 35 ; 10 : 43, 44 ; Luke 22 : 26.

restless, anxious search for material goods;¹ within the other food and drink and dress are to be provided by a loving Father as great but not the greatest needs of the trustful soul.² In a word: in the old social order Jesus saw the tyranny of selfishness and hatred; in the new, he sees a universal reign of love—the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men.

III.

This expression the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of men is in many minds the substance of Christianity. And such is the case if these terms are given their proper meaning. But at this point we have to distinguish sharply between two possible conceptions of divine sonship, each of which is not inconsistent with Christian doctrine. (1) On the one hand there is the noble sentiment that holds sway in most religious thought today according to which all men are the sons of God in that they were created by him, possess moral attributes, and are capable, however wicked, of rising to nobility in self-sacrifice and devotion—in a word in that they possess simply by virtue of their humanity an ineradicable likeness to God. According to this view, God is always humanity's loving Father, ready to forgive, and yearning after his lost children. (2) On the other hand, there is the more intensive conception of sonship, which, while never denying that in a general sense men may be spoken of as the sons of God, and affirming strenuously the love of God for men, yet uses the word to express the more intimate and responsive relation with God enjoyed by those who are seeking noble ends, who are consciously seeking moral strength from prayer, who in a personal sense love God while seeking to keep his commandments, and who, through this personal contact with God, gain a new character, which, while possessed of the same powers as before, is yet fuller of the divine likeness.

These distinctions are evidently those of terminology rather

¹ Luke 12 : 30.

² Luke 12 : 30; Matt. 6 : 31, 32.

than of thought. The man who especially emphasizes universal, racial divine sonship will be sure to admit different degrees of filial obedience and love; while, as already intimated, he who does not prefer to use thus indiscriminately the only words capable of supreme religious content, nevertheless is most eager to urge at the same time God's love for the race and the possibilities of reformation on the part of the evil man. The recognition of this simple fact would have spared the world much unseemly wrangling among men who believed practically the same truths, but preferred to call them different names.

Of these two uses of the same terms, which was the one adopted by Jesus? The second. Not that he denies that relationship which we moderns denote as the divine paternity and sonship. The most casual reading of the New Testament shows that this conception of the love of God is the very core of the Christian teaching.¹ Jesus was himself the living revelation of this love. It is not impossible, though it is by no means beyond question, that, in the third of the three parables interjected by Luke² into the main record of Christ's teachings, he sets forth this love of God in the terms of fatherhood. Further, it may be true, as Wendt³ says, that "he proceeds upon the certainty of it, as upon an undoubted axiom." But even with these admissions, it seems certain that Jesus, with a characteristic sense of that which is appropriate, reserved ever the noblest words of humanity for designating the noblest relations; that is, the relations of those persons who were members of the kingdom of God—who, to use the Johannine expression, had been born anew.⁴ In fact, he almost explicitly stated this to be true when he repudiated physical relations and made those his family who did the will of his father in heaven.⁵ This appears also in the

¹ Matt. 6 : 31 *sq.* Luke, 18 : 14. Matt. 18 : 14; 5 : 44, 48.

² Luke 15 : 3-32.

³ *Teaching of Jesus*, I, 199.

⁴ John 3 : 3. If the other less likely, though possible, translation of *ἄνωθεν* "from above" be adopted, the expression gains in explicit reference.

⁵ Matt. 12 : 49, 50. Mark 3 : 34, 35. Luke 8 : 21.

Johannine comment upon the significance of Jesus, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God."¹ From the exactness of these statements one cannot help concluding that to extend the use of these terms by Jesus to all mankind is to confound what was in his mind a possible condition with that which was real only in the case of far too small a number. It would probably be true to his conception to say that as the terms son and father, in the ethical sense—which was the only usage he gave the terms, except to denote purely physical relations—are correlative, the one relationship cannot exist without the other.² It is not a question of abstract ethics that here concerns us, but of fact. And the fact of a real spiritual union with God, the outcome of man's natural and normal powers, is called by Jesus and the earlier Christian writers a sonship and fatherhood.

It may be urged that the point at issue is trivial. If Jesus recognizes and enforces that universal love of God for men which is today denoted by the expression fatherhood of God, and if, indeed, his application of the term is simply a question of terminology, why attempt any sharp discrimination? What does it signify if, while teaching today's doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, he prefers to call only the members of the new society brothers one by another and sons of God?

The answer is threefold. (1) To give to a specific term a general meaning is to confuse all a man's teaching. That which is true of the divine paternity in the sense of Jesus, is not true of the divine paternity in the larger sense. Promises made to those who in this deeper sense pray to their father are not to be transferred to those who will not so pray, but prefer hatred to love, wickedness to purity. A bad man cannot honestly desire that the father's kingdom should come and that his will should be done on earth as in heaven. A man full of selfishness and licentiousness cannot seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness in firm trust that a heavenly father will provide for

¹ John 1 : 12.

² See WENDT, *Teaching of Jesus*, I, 191, 199.

his necessities. The example of a merciful heavenly father is hardly sufficient to move a cruel and rapacious man to deeds of love. (2) As a result, to extend the usage of Jesus farther than the limits he himself has set, is to contravene one of the fundamental distinctions of his teachings: the eternal distinction between goodness and badness. A bad man can become a good man—even in his wickedness he is loved by God; but he must attempt to realize his nobler possibilities, he must become a good man before Jesus will call him a son of God. We may not ourselves prefer such a terminology, but if we are to represent Jesus we must use words as he used them—and few indeed have been the teachers who, by a reservation of common terms, have expressed more accurately an ethical distinction so fundamental. (3) Upon this ideal sonship is based the ideal brotherhood. Men are brothers through the possession of a life derived from the same parent. So in the new social order of Jesus, these men who have satisfied the deepest possibilities of their nature and are living in union with God—that is, are righteous—are brothers. Here again we meet with an accurate use of terms. The members of the kingdom alone are called brothers by Jesus. Outside of those that clearly refer to physical relationship there is not a saying of Jesus preserved for us that does not restrict this most expressive term to the description of this new social relationship, the possibility and nature of which it was the office of Jesus to reveal. In actual society as he saw it, fraternal relations were not prevalent. Men quarreled, lusted, hated, deceived, fought. Their very philanthropy¹ and religion² were tinged with selfishness. But in the new social order he sought to portray and inaugurate none of these things were to be. Men were to be perfect as their heavenly father was perfect,³ and among them reconciliation, purity, love, were to be the outcome of their consciousness of their divine brotherhood. And what is this but saying that the ideal society that awaits the world as a fulfillment of man's social capacities is no mere collocation of dis-

¹Matt. 6:2. Cf. Luke 14:12, *sq.*

²Matt. 5:48.

³Matt. 6:5, 16.

similar, repellant individuals, but a union of men similarly righteous, all alike possessed of a consciousness of noble possibilities, seeking the good one of another, with moral impulses springing from their religious life—a unity whose bonds are organic and spiritual?

IV.

Such then is in essence the ideal social order of Jesus—a divine brotherhood. It is necessary now to reëxamine his words in order to discover whether or not it has any practical bearing upon today's social life. Does Jesus regard this ideal as a Utopia, an idealist's heaven which is to hang forever over the world an unattainable dream? Or does he think of it as at least partly realizable in human life?

1. It is at once evident that Jesus does not regard this new social order as isolated. Some time it will embrace all the earth. In this particular he both follows and enlarges the idea of the kingdom of God as he found it. It is not therefore a school or brotherhood in the narrow sense of academy or monastery that he founded, but a social force capable of expressing itself in a universal society.

2. It is also clear that the new society may be very widely distributed. The bond of union is not that of organization, but that of a common relation to the King and Father. Distance is therefore not an element adverse to a progressive social unity. Jesus himself in his own estimation is the visible expression of this center in which all these relations converge and unite. In his death he drew all men to himself.¹ Wherever a little group of brethren is, there is also the Son of Man.² The parables of the leaven³ and the seed⁴ indicate at once a diffused and growing unity.

3. All this points to a spiritual element in the character of the new society. It is not to be a mere coercive aggregation of men; its essential element is not its form but the coördinating

¹ John 13 : 32.

² Matt. 18 : 20.

³ Matt. 13 : 33.

⁴ Matt. 13 : 24-31, 36-44.

and unifying spiritual life that is common to all. Membership is psychical, not external, and its blessings are also spiritual. The poor in spirit¹ are to be its members; within it the mourner is to be comforted;² those hungry for righteousness are to be fed;³ the poor cared for,⁴ perplexed and worrying souls reassured,⁵ the pure in heart to see God.⁶ The Johannine conception is even more explicit. Entrance to it is dependent wholly upon a spiritual renewal,⁷ and in the sonship thus obtained are the forces⁸ that are to make for the complete realization of the specific ideals Jesus presents as the features of the perfect social life. In this spiritual character of the kingdom lies its energy and its practicability. Membership within it is possible for all since all are spiritual.⁹ It can move not merely in organized but in unorganized ways. It can remake public opinion and social conceptions. In a word it is dynamic—a power as well as a condition. And this power lies within the new possibilities of divine sonship.

4. In its turn this points to the possibility of a beginning and progressive social order here and now. Jesus in his double revelation of God to man and humanity to man inaugurated its historical life. If consciousness of sonship is possible for men, and moral development along both individual and social lines is made possible by man's very constitution; if Jesus could speak of his immediate disciples as enjoying the blessings of the kingdom¹⁰ and as brethren with God as their father; and if the number of these followers was to increase numerically just as their virtue might deepen; the conclusion seems unavoidable that a "divine society" is thought of by Jesus as already within the world. Its spiritual elements save it from the limbo of Utopias. True, it is not yet complete, either intensively or extensively. In its social as in its individual aspect the progress of righteousness is gradual, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn

¹ Matt. 5 : 3.² Matt. 5 : 4.³ Matt. 5 : 6.⁴ Matt. 6 : 24 sq.⁵ Matt. 6 : 31, 32.⁶ Matt. 5 : 8⁷ John 3 : 3.⁸ John 15 : 1, 4.⁹ Matt. 8 : 11.¹⁰ Matt. 11 : 11, 12; cf. Luke 17 : 21 and Matt. 12 : 28.

in the ear.¹ For Jesus was no believer in a dualism either in heaven or on earth, and this regenerate society in the world is slowly to spread until like yeast in the dough, it transforms its entire environment. To use the noble words of an early Christian writer, "What the soul is in the body that are Christians in the world."²

The method and the means by which the world is thus to be transformed into the kingdom do not concern us here. It is enough to point out the fact that the kingdom is thought of by Jesus as present as well as future, and that its history is an evolution. Each stage of the growth will be to a considerable degree determined by the character of the men—or groups of men—with whom the new order has to deal.³ Naturally the rates of progress will vary at different developing points. The influence of the old social environment will always be felt, and its elements will yield themselves with unequal readiness to the new ideal. But the process nevertheless will go on. According to Jesus it will be remembered,⁴ men from their very constitution, if only that constitution be allowed its normal operations, will unite in some social bond. To make this social bond religious and social relationships moral is to bring in the new order of things.

5. Historically speaking the stages thus involved are (1) the appearance of Jesus, (2) the formation of the first group of men whom Jesus gathered as the nucleus of future greatness, (3) the gradual development of other similar groups of men throughout the world, (4) the gradual leavening of all social environment, (5) the consummation of this process in the new age.

6. What then is this consummation, this end of the age? Certainly not death. Jesus seldom considers the death of the individual. The transition between "this age" and "the coming" is between eras and societies. The glorious kingdom is to come after the period of growth and conflict is past. The catas-

¹ Mark 4 : 28.

² *Epistle to Diognetus*, chap. vi.

³ See the familiar parable of the sower, Matt. 13 : 3 *sq.*; Mark 4 : 3 *sq.*; Luke 8 : 5 *sq.*

⁴ See this JOURNAL, p. 182 *sq.*

trophic completion of the slow process is after the possibilities of that process are exhausted, and with it will begin a new and better age.

It would not be safe to say that this is not to be after death. From some of the words of Jesus it seems as if such were the case. But in this connection Jesus ignores death. He never for a moment thinks that men cease to be men simply because they are dead. No more does human society. But whether before or after death, the realization of this ideal to which the age has slowly been leading the race is certain. The time of conflict will pass. The power of the new order will be so great that all opposition will have past or have been crushed. That for which men have prayed will appear. The kingdom will then in truth have come, and the will of God will be done as in heaven. Those who wilfully refuse to join in the society will grieve most miserably, their suffering being the result of their inability to share in the blessings of the new humanity.

7. Although this triumphant establishment of the ideal society is the goal of human evolution under the impulse of the newly revealed religious forces, Jesus does not allow himself to weaken the practical operation of an attempted realization of its laws by any over description of its joys. In fact his concern with them is comparatively little. He has, for instance, much more to say about marriage and wealth than about heaven and hell. As may appear later, his descriptions of what should be special social relationships are never temporizing but absolute, yet the consummation of the age's progress is chiefly advanced as an incentive to approximate its ideal conditions in the present. In a word, Jesus concentrates his attention upon the period of development. And this is the same thing as saying that the nearest approach to a realization of a Christian society is to be found where the principles of his ideal society are most nearly expressed in the institutions and life of a people, where this divine sonship and the consequent human fraternity become facts, not the premises of a doctrinaire sociology.

8. Is then this new social order, as it develops in scattered

groups and attempts to transfigure the world, coextensive with the life of the church ?

Jesus gives no clear answer, but his position, to judge from the few uncertain expressions of the gospel,¹ seems to imply that the church is one form of the attempt to realize the principles embodied in the kingdom of God. But there is not a trace of any belief on his part that the two would ever be coextensive. The new social order was to be religious ; historically, it has made much progress through the aid of religious organizations. But it is as much grander than the church as an ideal is grander than the actual ; as much wider as social life is wider than any one institution ; as much more catholic as Christianity is more catholic than ecclesiasticism.²

V.

Jesus, then, thinks that an ideal society is not beyond human attainment, but is the natural possibility for man's social capacities and powers. The new social order, as a spiritual fellowship between men and between God and men expressing itself in social relations, may at once be established potentially in the midst of that other social order, which is based upon a disregard of the normal religious and social capacities of men, and which becomes of necessity self-destructive, and in tendency anarchistic. In his conception of this progressively realized social order we see that two elements are essential : (1) the divine sonship as seen in the moral regeneration of the individual ; and (2) the organic union of good men typified by the family. To describe in some detail the extension of these principles of sonship and brotherhood to the various phases and institutions of social life, and to show in what lie the forces that aid in their incarnation, must be left to subsequent papers.

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¹ Matt. 16 : 18 ; 18 : 17.

² For an exceedingly well balanced discussion of this point see DENNY, *Studies in Theology*, ch. viii. See also FAIRBAIRN, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, 515-519 ; ORR, *The Christian View of God and the World*, especially, 402-412 ; FREEMANTLE, *The World as the Subject of Redemption*.